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## EPA proposes new clean-air regulations for power plants

By MIKE LYNCH, Enterprise Outdoors Writer

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has proposed a new regulation that would require power plants in 31 states to reduce emissions of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide.

The Transport Rule is meant to curb air pollution that travels across state lines. Both sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide react in the atmosphere to create acid rain and ground-level ozone, often in eastern states downwind from Midwestern power plants.

"Both of these pollutants cause a series of human health effects and environmental damages, including premature mortality, chronic and acute bronchitis, heart attacks, hospitalizations, emergency room visits, asthma attacks, lost days at work and school, acid deposition (acid rain), damage to sensitive forests and nitrogen-sensitive coastal waters, and impaired visibility at national parks and wilderness areas," according to the EPA.

The rule would replace EPA's 2005 Clean Air Interstate Rule (CAIR), which a federal court determined in December 2008 was not in compliance with the Clean Air Act. The rule would apply to 31 states in the eastern half of the U.S. and also to the District of Columbia.

The EPA says that by 2014 the rule would reduce sulfur dioxide emissions by 71 percent over 2005 levels. Nitrogen oxide levels would drop 52 percent in that span.

The EPA says that would yield more than \$120 billion to \$290 billion in annual health and welfare benefits in 2014 and would help avoid between 14,000 and 36,000 premature deaths as a result of air pollution.

"The health benefits to New York state should be extremely high," said Adirondack Council spokesman John Sheehan. "New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio appear to be in line to reap the highest benefit in terms of human health and the amount of money we spend to protect it or fix health problems as a result of bad air quality."

The EPA also says the rule change would help reduce acid rain in the Adirondacks.

"Areas especially sensitive to acidification include portions of the Northeast (particularly, the Adirondack and Catskill Mountains, portions of New England, and streams in the mid-Appalachian highlands) and southeastern streams," according to the proposed rule. "This regulatory action will decrease acid deposition in the transport region and is likely to have positive effects on the health and productivity of aquatic ecosystems in the region."

Neil Woodworth, executive director of the Adirondack Mountain Club, has fought hard for these tougher regulations. He said one reason is that acid rain not only effects Adirondack waterways but also the soil, which doesn't recover as quickly.

"Given time, the lakes and streams of the Adirondacks will flush clean if we turn off the spigot of nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxide," he said, "but what happens on a daily and nightly basis in the Adirondacks is that when precipitation falls on the ground, soil calcium is neutralized."

When soil loses its calcium and becomes more acidic, it can have a negative effect on the ecosystem. Calcium is an essential element in plants and trees.

"Let's face it. Plants of all kinds, including trees, have to have soil calcium for proper cellular structure," Woodworth said.

The regulation will be open to a 60-day comment period. More information about the proposed rule is available at [www.epa.gov/airtransport](http://www.epa.gov/airtransport).

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